

Richard Outzen: "Serious Problems Remain in U.S.–Turkey Relationship"

Bloomberg HT Journalist Ali Cinar interviewed Former Pentagon Official Richard Outzen on Bloomberg HT

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Rich Outzen, Senior Consultant - Dragoman LLC, stated that the bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S., while troubled, have remained steady since 2019. 'The level is low but consistent at the same time,' he explained. 'I don't see much of a change. There is a strategical mechanism in principle, but it is for expanding solidarity and consultation. But in reality, it's cold in Washington, D.C. Cold weather is also reigning in Ankara. Nevertheless, there are competent ambassadors in both capitals.'



Former Pentagon and State Department Official Outzen stated there are serious problems between the two countries, such as a lack of confidence, and everyone knows the cause. 'We support YPG in Syria,' he said. 'There is competition throughout the defense industry. The S400-F35-F16 project has not been completed and solved satisfactorily for both sides. Anti-Turkey lobbies are influential in Washington. All of these concern Ankara.'

Mr.Outzen also highlighted the doubts about Erdogan in Washington and the concerns about Turkey's democratic standards. He added that Turkey's foreign politics, starting with the Mediterranean issue, disturb the U.S. Turkey is carrying out an independent policy, which is not new but is an approach Washington still refuses to accept. In his TV interview, Outzen reminded us that the Turkish election is approaching. 'Turkey's population is growing,' he noted. 'In Ukraine, Caucasia, Tripoli, and Syria. In the superpower competition era, Russia, Iran, and China are at the table right now. The USA and Turkey do not expect a big crisis. I expect the same thing in 2023 as the one that happened in 2022 until the election. I expect an improvement no matter who wins the election.'

"Big wars can end in various ways."

Mr.Outzen shared three different scenarios for the Ukrainian War. In one scenario, one party wins, and the other loses. The second scenario is that both parties understand they will not achieve all their goals, leading to an agreement. In the third scenario, both parties continue the conflict, which becomes frozen. Outzen said this is called frozen conflict. 'Neither Ukraine nor Russia seem to wish to continue the war. Both sides will try small and medium-sized offensives, but they will not yield results. This will continue throughout the year. I think both parties can win. It will turn into a frozen conflict.' he added.

"The war has negative effects on the U.S., the E.U., and Turkey."

'Financially speaking, Russia is in a bad situation because of the sanctions. Ukraine is even in a worse condition, but they receive aid. I think Europe has an energy problem. Europe has sufficient gas this year, and there will be no problem until March or April. But if the winter between 2023 and 2024 turns out to be bad, it will be a real problem for Europe. This may be an opportunity for Turkey. Turkey wants to be the energy center,' Outzen said. He also added that Turkmen gas pipelines might go to Europe over Turkey, with sources in the Black Sea and Mediterranean. He highlighted that it will present opportunities for the country if manufacturers and consumers utilize Turkey correctly.

"U.S. and Turkey have done much joint work in the defense industry"

Mr.Outzen shared his views on recent defense developments between Turkey and U.S.: 'In the last 30 years, Turkey's independent ventures naturally impacted this as well. The USA cannot sell many products because Turkey fulfills them independently and sells them to third countries. Turkey and the USA aim for the same goals in the African market. They may execute some projects in the education field as they did in Afghanistan. It will be beneficial for Turkish Air Force and NATO if Congress approves the F-16s.However, I am not very optimistic. There are some people within Congress who disapprove of this deal. Bilateral defense projects do not seem so bright.' he said.

*Colonel Rich Outzen (Ret.) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council IN TURKEY and a geopolitical analyst and consultant currently serving private sector clients as Dragoman LLC. From 2016 to 2021, Outzen served in the US Department of State as both a military and civilian advisor, working in the Policy Planning Office and later the Office of the Special Representative for Syria. From 2013 to 2016, he was a member of the National Defense University (NDU) and Institute for National Security Studies faculty. He served as the US defense attaché in Kabul from 2014 to 2015. He previously served as the deputy chief of staff for training and development for the US Security Coordinator in Jerusalem. He has researched and published extensively on matters of policy and strategy, with a focus on the greater Middle East and Central Asia.

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